

Excerpted from "How To Talk", by Clapp & Kane

Developing a Statement----“The Chreia”---In the paraphrase your effort is to supply appropriate words and to fit them to the author's scheme for the thought of the passage. Here is another exercise in which, supplied with an idea, you develop it for yourself in the most effective language you can muster. Choose an old saying, or select from a work you may happen to be reading a particular assertion or remark, and without reading the author's development of the idea proceed for yourself to expand the statement in any way you please. Talk right out. Present your thoughts to a mirror in as convincing a manner as you can, or if you have a companion in the task of improving speech technique, the two of you may profitably play audience for each other.

For this is exactly what you do in conversation, or in discussion when the statement of another draws from you the development of support or opposition. It is the thing that you are prompted to do in your club meeting. Only in this exercise you may be patient with yourself. You will have no interruptions' you can present your whole flow of thought. Just try the exercise. You will find that it provides a whole series of steps in the process of making flow of language serve the flow of thought. You will discover that the fluency we admire so much in certain others is to be had for the fair price of the application and industry required to persist in the exercises that build or help to build a valuable habit.

A Practical Device of the Greeks.---There is nothing new about this exercise. You can try it in its earliest forms. It was the device of Aphonius, one of the ancient rhetoricians, who proposed to his pupils a “chreia,” or suggestive sentence to be developed by certain rules.

Often the chreia was a maxim or proverb, current on the lips of the people. At times it was a statement from the writings of one of the great philosophers, or it might be the statement of a fact involving the expression of a truth. To develop any of the forms of the chreia, Aphonius proposed eight different plans:

1. By commendation or approval of the saying.
2. By a paraphrase---expressing the meaning of the sentence in other words, with some further development or explanation.
3. By cause or reason---telling why the maxim is true or why the fact is as stated.
4. By indicating resemblance---illustrating by comparison with similar things.
5. By contrast---illustrating by comparison with contrary things.
6. By giving examples.
7. By citing testimonies or authorities.
8. By a conclusion or appeal addressed to the mind or heart of the listener,

The problems that vexed the ancients in their efforts to gain control of

language varied little from those that trouble us today. The formulas listed by Aphonius for developing a thought are those which have been followed in all ages. You will find them interestingly outlined, with illustrations from modern writers and speakers, in Genung's "Working Principles of Rhetoric," or Baldwin's "Oral and Written Composition."

Ways of Expanding----Make this exercise a part of your program of improvement. Begin with one of your own favorite proverbs. Expand the familiar saying by one of the methods just enumerated. Do not resort to paper and pencil at first. Utter the sentence you have chosen for the purpose and then talk on. The first results may not be masterly samples of prose but you are not concerned about that. The thought is familiar' develop it' set it forth in an even and deliberate succession of word-groups.